



Maidstone, St John's Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 118753
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291241
Inspection date 2 October 2006
Reporting inspector Helen Hutchings

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Provender Way
School category	Voluntary aided		Grove Green
Age range of pupils	4-11		Maidstone ME14 5TZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01622 735916
Number on roll (school)	221	Fax number	01622 735922
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Gill Munson
		Headteacher	Tim Harrington
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 2 October 2006	Inspection number 291241
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those who hold statements, is in line with the national average. Most children are from White British backgrounds and all pupils are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, with some outstanding features. The school is successfully meeting its aim 'to encourage pupils to achieve their potential in an atmosphere of high expectation, care and respect'. The school's Christian ethos is strong and pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is rightly proud of its personal, social and health education programme. It is an integral part of the school's outstanding care, support and guidance, helping pupils to develop into responsible and mature young people. The school places itself at the heart of the community and pupils reflect this in their care for one another and respect for others beyond the school. The school council spoke with great enthusiasm of how the school raises funds for charity. This is just one of the many ways by which pupils' understanding of community and their economic awareness are developed. There are equally strong links with other schools, successfully enhancing opportunities for all partners, for example, secondary pupils run a bank in the school and contribute to the teaching of modern foreign languages. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative of what the school does for their children. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe there. One parent represented the views of many who had written positive comments: 'The school itself is a perfect example of a community school. The children are all very respectful and well mannered. The standards of work produced never fail to amaze me.'

The standards reached by pupils by the time they leave school have been significantly above the national average for a number of years. This represents good achievement from the time children join the Foundation Stage to the end of Year 6. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work because teaching is good and makes learning interesting. This term, teachers are identifying further opportunities for pupils to practise literacy and numeracy skills more in other subjects and to make the curriculum more coherent by linking subjects through themes, particularly for younger pupils, but this initiative is still at a relatively early stage. The award of Healthy School status is an indication of pupils' understanding of how to live healthy lives and the importance of taking exercise. Pupils participate in a wide range of sport, drama, music and church clubs. Pupils contribute their views openly and the new members of the school council are already thinking about how they could introduce even more shady places into the playground.

One reason for the school's success is the good leadership and management that results in strong teamwork. The headteacher leads by example and his vision for the school is understood and underpins school practice. The ceaseless drive for improvement is reflected in the school's lack of complacency. Performance of all aspects of the school's work is evaluated accurately and action taken if any area is seen to be weak. For example, pupils were not doing as well in writing as in other areas and a focus on this last year helped to improve standards in the tests at the end of Year 2. Pupils' progress is

monitored closely and effective action is taken if a pupil is seen to be falling behind. As part of a current review of assessment, the school is developing marking strategies

to ensure that all staff are aware of the most effective procedures already used within the school and new systems have just been introduced to monitor pupils' progress even more regularly. Above all, pupils thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe there.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Implement the plans to make learning more interesting for pupils by linking subjects.
- Develop assessment procedures to ensure that marking always shows pupils how their work could be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils understand that hard work will help them to achieve well and as one said 'Teachers make it fun but we work hard.' Children's attainment when they join the school in the Reception class is broadly in line with what is expected nationally. Pupils make good progress in their first year and then build well on this foundation through the school, so that by the end of Year 6, standards in the national tests in English, mathematics and science are significantly above the national average. The gap between school and national performance increases consistently as they move through the school. Pupils' progress from Year 2 to 6 has been consistently above national averages in recent years and in the top 10% of schools in 2003 and 2004. The improvement in writing last year was particularly noticeable in the higher proportion of pupils reaching above average standards in the Year 2 tests. A recently introduced programme for handwriting is resulting in high quality handwriting and well presented work. The school is not complacent and is broadening its approach to improving writing further throughout the rest of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected well in their outstanding record of attendance, with no unauthorised absence. The school is an exceptionally happy environment for pupils to learn and play together because pupils understand their own and others' feelings well. Pupils know that there is always an adult within easy reach if they need one. As one pupil said, 'We work together – we're a huge team'. One group talked enthusiastically about how pupils had worked together to plan and present their ideas to secure funding for a proposed school garden, which has since been created. Fruit and vegetables grown there are now used by the cookery club. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because the school plans carefully to give pupils many opportunities to explore a range of moral and ethical issues and cultural diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Classrooms are busy places and pupils work purposefully. Teachers make lessons interesting and pupils concentrate well so that they understand what they are learning and talk confidently about their work. They work particularly well in groups so that pupils deepen their understanding by discussing their ideas and learning together. Work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouragement as well, keeping expectations high by indicating where work is not good enough. Pupils find their targets helpful and most have a reasonable understanding of how to improve their work. However, the school recognises that some marking does not provide quite enough guidance on precisely what would make the work even better next time and this is a current focus for further improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has a positive impact on the progress pupils make. The recent links made between subjects is already beginning to improve pupils' skills by challenging them to apply the skills learned in one subject in different contexts. For example, extending writing opportunities through history is one of the reasons for writing standards improving. The school recognises that this requires further work to maximise opportunities and develop a stronger thematic approach across subjects to make learning more coherent for pupils. Older pupils benefit from some specialist teaching and the extension of modern foreign languages from Years 5 and 6 to Years 3 and 4 is another positive development.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided and Year 6 pupils are already looking forward to their 'venture week' towards the end of the academic year. These activities also impact strongly on pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and concern for the whole child is seen by staff and governors as central to school life. Pupils feel valued and cared for. As one pupil said, 'There's always someone to help' and that someone might be another pupil or an adult as everyone sees it as a personal responsibility to look after one another. The school's safety procedures meet all requirements. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and appropriate action taken when individuals or groups begin to fall behind. The termly consultation with parents keeps them well informed and able to bring concerns to the attention of the school at an early stage. Parental responses to questionnaires indicated very strong satisfaction with the guidance and support provided for children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher gives the school a very strong lead and has established a positive collegiate atmosphere, enabling leadership and management to be shared across senior managers and subject coordinators. A measure of this success was the ability of the school to continue successfully last year when the school was without a deputy headteacher. This recent appointment has strengthened the leadership group further so that the capacity for ongoing improvement is good. The school already identifies its strengths and areas for improvement accurately and takes effective action to address weaknesses. Initiatives are carefully planned to make sure that they will have a positive impact and staff trained before introduction. For example, the rigorous approach to developing personal and social education has resulted in a very effective programme for pupils. Similarly, provision for information and communication technology has improved well since the last inspection and is now a strength of the school. Pupils' standards in the subject are good. One pupil even remarked that "the new interactive whiteboards 'spice up' lessons a lot" so the investment is impacting positively on learning. The governing body makes a valuable contribution, particularly by adding individual expertise to complement that found within the staff.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St John's Church of England Primary School Provender Way Grove Green Maidstone Kent ME14 5TZ

3 October 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently and for looking after me so well at lunch. I very much enjoyed my time with you and enjoyed talking to some pupils. I would have liked to have had a longer visit to speak with even more children. The school council really helped me to understand just how much you think of your school. I agree that St John's is a good school and that some things are really excellent.

I told the council that I would write to tell you all what I think so that is what this letter is about. I particularly noticed that your behaviour is superb and that you work hard in lessons. You told me that you feel safe and really enjoy school and I am pleased that your attendance is high. Your teachers make lessons interesting and you are given the help you need to understand your work. This helps you to do well in tests. I saw you concentrating really hard when I visited the classrooms. You are lucky to have many interesting things to do at lunchtime and you all make sure that everyone is included and has someone to play with.

Mr Harrington and the staff have planned some things for you to make your work even better. These include linking your work more across subjects, such as practising your writing in history or geography. They will also make sure that when they mark your work you understand exactly what you have to do to make your next piece of work better.

I hope that you continue to have a very successful year ahead.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely Mrs H Hutchings Inspector